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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 000017

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/01/2019

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SUBJECT: JANUARY 11 NAC DISCUSSION ON NATO REPOSE FORCE

Classified By: Ambassador Ivo Daalder. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a January 11 North Atlantic Council discussion on the implementation of the new NATO Response Force (NRF) structure authorized by Defense Ministers in June 2009, the following points were underscored: the need for remaining nations to come forward with their national voluntary targets (VNTs), the importance of visible assurance, and the need to find creative ways to address resource and cost-sharing. END SUMMARY

12. (C) Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Defense Policy and Planning (DASG/DPP) Heinrich Brauss reported that the Response Forces Pool (RFP) was implemented on January 1, 2010 with NRF 14, and that the Immediate Response Force (IRF) would be initiated on July 1, 2010 with NRF 15. Brauss noted with regard to force generation, most requirements had been filled for 2010 and 2011 and those not filled could be mitigated with forces offered to the Response Forces Pool, provided that Allies make the necessary assets available. A full picture of how well NATO would meet the forces goals for the NRF beyond 2011 will emerge following the November 2010 Global Force Generation Conference. Regarding VNTs, Brauss stressed that only 15 Allies had made offers. He urged the remaining Allies to declare their VNTs as soon as possible. Brauss' call for contributions was underscored by Deputy Secretary General Claudio Bisogno, emphasizing that the ministers committed to this six months ago and VNTs are an expression of genuine political contribution. So far, there had been little progress using NRF to reassure Allies of the cohesion of the Alliance and collective defense. Brauss also pointed out that using the NRF to provide visible assurance to all Allies is viable, even for 2011, provided a decision is taken in 2010.

13. (C) The Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC) Admiral Di Paola presented his assessment of the NRF in its new structure. Di Paola, addressing the issue of visible assurance, noted that the current NRF planning did not have a visible assurance element but offered plenty of latitude if nations were willing to host exercises and assume the associated costs under the cost fall where they lie principle. Several exercises for both 2010 and 2011 have yet to have a host. Such flexibility, however, requires national willingness and political direction from the NAC.

14. (C) During the follow-on discussion among Allies, Italy presented its VNC of 8.8 percent of the Immediate Response Force, while Turkey noted that it would present its offer in February at the informal Defense Ministerial and encouraged others to do so. Belgium stated it had not made its offer

because it needs a mechanism to equate the capabilities to percentage contribution. Belgium prefers to make offers in terms of tangible capabilities, estimating that the capabilities it will put on the table would amount to around two percent of the IRF.

15. (C) Allies generally agreed and endorsed the importance of the NRF (Estonia said the NRF was the embodiment of solidarity), and urged nations which have yet to make VNT proposals to do so prior to the informal defense ministerial in Istanbul in February. Comments supported the political necessity for visible assurance, particularly since it was directed by the defense ministers in June 2009. Many expressed the desire for Article 5 types of exercises in nations on NATO's periphery, provided such nations were willing to host. Several nations pointed to the need to properly prepare such exercises both politically and diplomatically, and to ensure transparency, while one nation called for exercises to be made regular, routine, and transparent, noting the Alliance cannot allow Russia to affect its exercises. Several nations also expressed concerns over funding for NATO exercises and asked for NATO common funding citing the rationale that NATO exercises are quintessential NATO activities, therefore should be funded by NATO. Under the cost fall where they lie principle, burden often falls on the most active nations. Suggested approaches to exercises and defraying costs included: a gradual approach to exercises on the periphery so as to ease the political impacts and costs (e.g. begin small and work up); consider coordinating with national headquarters for assistance in planning exercises; and consider "NATOizing" current or

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planned bilateral/multilateral exercises. The UK specifically proposed that the U.S.-led, 10-nation exercise in the Baltics be conducted under a NATO imprimatur.

16. (C) DSYG Bisogniero concluded by asking the Military Committee to further discuss the visible assurance issue and consider options for exercises, taking into account the above referenced suggestions as it develops military recommendations to present to the NAC.
DAALDER